

## **NIH POLICY MANUAL**

### **2300-451-1 - Employee Recognition and Awards Program**

**Issuing Office: OD/OHR/DERT, 435-6741**

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1. **Explanation of Material Transmitted:** This instruction outlines NIH procedures to be used in recognizing employee through awards.
2. **Filing Instructions:**

**Remove:** NIH Manual 2300-451-1 dated 04/09/84.  
NIH Manual 2300-451-2, dated 06/15/88

**Insert:** NIH Manual 2300-451-1 dated 12/02/96.

**PLEASE NOTE:** For information on:

- Content of this chapter, contact the issuing office listed above.
- NIH Manual System, contact the Division of Management Services, OMA on 496-2832, or enter this URL: <http://www3.od.nih.gov/oma/manualchapters>.

#### **A. The Guiding Principles of Recognition:**

1. Link recognition to NIH's and IC mission goals, and objectives. Recognition decisions must support defined mission, goals and objectives.
2. Provide equity in the distribution of recognition. Ensure that the contribution toward results determines the amount of cash recognition. All NIH employees should be given an equal opportunity to be recognized for the results of their work.
3. Give recognition for specific achievements. Encourage managers to use recognition to encourage positive actions or acknowledge results. Actions that produce positive and measurable outcomes should be rewarded. Managers are responsible for ensuring that recognition is specifically linked to positive actions and contributions.
4. Involve coworkers, customers, and partners in recognition decisions. They often have an awareness of the contribution that an employee makes. ICs should experiment with ways in which such input can be used.

5. Give recognition in a timely manner. Recognition given in a timely manner is most effective.
6. Emphasize group recognition. Group recognition encourages teamwork and fosters the cooperation needed to address the many complex issues faced by NIH.
7. When practicable emphasize non-monetary recognition. Use of innovative non-monetary recognition can create a positive work environment.
8. Get input from employees regarding the type of recognition they receive. In appropriate circumstances, employees should be given the opportunity to provide input about the type of recognition they would like to receive.
9. Publicize recognition distribution. ICs should be open in publicizing who receives what recognition for what actions.
10. Provide flexibility for recognition decisions at the IC level. ICs are encouraged to delegate responsibility for recognition decisions to the lowest level practicable and eliminate unnecessary layered review processes.
11. Incorporate funding for recognition into IC budget planning. ICs must ensure that employee recognition is given attention in the budgeting process.
12. Provide uniform training for managers and employees in effective use of recognition. A discussion of the recognition process should be included in all NIH management training programs, and recognition guidelines should be included in the orientation package for all new employees.

#### **B. Evaluation and Reports:**

ICs should evaluate their recognition programs. Periodically ICs should obtain feedback on the use and effectiveness of, and satisfaction with the revised program through focus groups, surveys, or other appropriate methods.

#### **C. NIH Employee Recognition and Awards Program Goals:**

The purpose of this program is to fairly and equitably recognize and reward individuals and groups for excellence in service to the overall mission of NIH and the mission of its individual components. This program provides various means of demonstrating, through monetary and non-monetary recognition, the high value NIH sets on employee contributions and achievements that enhance organizational performance, support organizational goals and objectives, and improve organizational quality.

#### **D. Who is Eligible to Receive Recognition?**

Eligibility for awards under this program varies with the type of award. Awards may be given to individual employees or groups of employees. With the exception of Quality Step Increases, employees are not limited in the number or types of awards they may receive or the frequency with which they receive them. However, employees

should not receive more than one monetary award for the same activity. Specific eligibility requirements are prescribed in Appendix A.

#### **E. What Legal Authorities Govern Recognition Programs?**

This program implements the law (5 United States Code 43, 45, and 53, E.O. 11438) and the regulations (5 CFR 430, 451, and 531) for recognizing and rewarding employees.

#### **F. Responsibilities:**

1. The Director, NIH, has overall authority and responsibility for the Employee Recognition and Awards Program. The Director, NIH, has delegated the authority to approve awards of up to \$10,000 for employees up to the GS-15 level to the IC Directors; however, the Director, NIH retains the following authorities:
  - a. Approving or disapproving monetary or cash awards for members of the SES/SSS/SBRS;
  - b. In accordance with current delegations of authority approving or disapproving monetary or cash awards for employees who report directly to the NIH Director, or to IC Directors; and
  - c. Making exceptions to this policy and approving additional award categories.
2. The Director, Office of Human Resource Management (OHRM), NIH, has responsibility for:
  - a. Developing, implementing, and updating a recognition/awards program that supports and enhances the accomplishment of NIH and IC goals and objectives, and meets employees' need for recognition;
  - b. Providing periodic training on the use of the recognition and awards program;
  - c. Ensuring the effective promotion and publicity of the program;
  - d. Evaluating the program for regulatory compliance and effective administration of the program by ICs; and
  - e. Reporting on the distribution of awards throughout the NIH and the effectiveness of the use of awards in recognizing NIH employees.
3. The Director, Office of Equal Opportunity is responsible for:
  - a. Ensuring the equitable distribution of awards throughout the NIH;
  - b. Identifying systemic barriers to the effectiveness of the awards program in recognizing all NIH employees;

- c. Providing advice and guidance to IC EEO Officers on appropriate mechanisms for evaluating IC programs for EEO compliance;
  - d. Recommending selectees for the annual Harvey Bullock and NIH EEO Awards to the NIH Director; and
  - e. Advising NIH senior management on the overall EEO compliance of the program.
4. IC Directors are responsible for:
- a. Ensuring the effective implementation and administration of the awards program within their organizations;
  - b. Incorporating funding for recognition into IC budget planning;
  - c. Delegating the authority to recognize employees up to the GS15 level and associated funding for such awards to the lowest practicable levels within the organization;
  - d. Encouraging the recognition of employees through monetary and non-monetary awards, as well as other informal forms of appreciation;
  - e. Ensuring that employee recognition is publicized; and
  - f. Ensuring equity in the distribution of awards.
5. IC Personnel Offices are responsible for:
- a. Providing advice and guidance to managers on awards mechanisms and policy;
  - b. Assisting IC managers and supervisors in completing requirements for submitting awards; and
  - c. When appropriate submitting awards requests for processing to DHRS.
6. IC EEO Officers are responsible for:
- a. Ensuring the equitable distribution of awards throughout the IC; and
  - b. Advising IC Directors and senior staff on the overall EEO compliance of the program.
7. Managers and Supervisors are responsible for:
- a. Recognizing employees for specific contributions and achievements;
  - b. Ensuring equity in the distribution of awards;
  - c. Recognizing contributions and achievements promptly;

- d. Soliciting input from employees, when appropriate, as to the choice of an award appropriate for the type of act, service or accomplishment for which they are being recognized; and
  - e. Developing and using informal types of recognition to acknowledge employees' activities or services and provide personalized, immediate recognition (e.g., saying "thank you", writing a letter of appreciation, posting a sign or banner that praises an employee, including employee in next conference or meeting, extending lunch period for a week, providing item of nominal value, etc.); and
  - f. Approving and disapproving, if authorized, awards for employees within their organizations.
8. Employees are responsible for:
- a. Executing daily and special activities in such a manner as to contribute to the enhancement of IC and NIH performance, the achievement of IC and NIH goals and objectives, and the improvement of organizational quality; and
  - b. Recommending to supervisors and managers other employees whose contributions and achievements are deserving of recognition.

### **Categories of Recognition:**

#### **1. Monetary Recognition:**

This category includes Special Act or Service Awards, On-the- Spot Awards, Quality Step Increases, Invention Awards, Staff Recognition Awards, and Suggestion Awards. (Note: ICs may have their own policies on the dollar amounts of awards. Supervisors should consult with their IC Personnel Office for dollar amount restrictions.)

##### **a. Special Act or Service Award:**

This type of award, ranging up to - \$10,000, recognizes significant one-time contributions of an employee or group in the public interest in connection with or related to official employment. (Examples of such contributions may be exceptional participation or leadership on a project, detail, or regular or special assignment; overcoming unusual difficulties or showing extraordinary creativity in meeting an objective; achieving substantial savings of resources in meeting an objective; achieving a breakthrough (scientific or technical) that contributes significantly to the accomplishment of a goal or mission; completing an important objective in record time; or other efforts which contribute to the efficiency, economy, or improvement of IC, NIH, or another federal agency's performance.)

This award may be given at any time for employee or group contributions that are within, as well as outside, normal job duties or responsibilities. Award amounts should be based on the tangible and intangible benefits to the government. Appendices B and C may be used to determine the amount for this type of award. Recognition should be awarded within 45 to 60 days of completion of the noteworthy contribution.

b. On-the-Spot Award (OTS):

A cash award ranging up to \$2500 which supervisors may use to recognize individual or groups of employees for their day-to-day extra efforts and contributions. (Examples of employee contributions that might be considered for this type of award are one-time noteworthy achievements which may not meet the criteria for other types of awards, volunteering for an extra or emergency assignment while maintaining own workload, using personal initiative and creativity to solve an unusual problem, or producing a work product of exceptionally high quality under tight deadlines.) The contributions being recognized will usually have been executed during a limited period of 4-6 weeks or less. Note: As a result of changes to pay processing by DHHS, all OTS awards must be made via electronic funds transfer.

c. Suggestion Award:

A certificate and cash may be given for an idea, submitted in writing by an individual or group of employees, that identifies a specific need and proposes a course of action for improvement to the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of IC and NIH programs and mission. The idea must be accepted by management prior to the granting of an award. Appendices B and C may be used to determine the amount, if appropriate, for an adopted suggestion.

d. Invention Award:

Recognition of an employee or group of employees for the development of a new and useful apparatus or process that is (or may be) patentable under the patent laws of the United States and which has value to NIH. An employee or group who submits a report of an invention, which may have value to the public and the government, may be considered for a cash award. An initial invention award of \$100 is granted to each employee when an invention disclosure has been favorably searched and a patent application has been filed. An additional award of \$300 is granted to each employee when a patent has been issued for the invention. A further award of up to \$35,000 may be granted on an invention owned by the United States Government when:

1. The invention benefits the public as evidenced by the number of

patent licenses granted, reports on commercialization from patent licenses, and other information pertaining to the commercial use of the invention; or

2. The invention is used by, and provides benefits to, the Government.

e. Quality Step Increase (QSI):

This form of recognition provides an increase in a General Schedule (GS) employee's (and former GM employees) rate of basic pay from one step of the grade of his/her position to the next higher step of the grade. An employee may be nominated for and receive a QSI at any time during the year.

However, an employee may receive only one QSI in a 52 week period. GS/GM employees are eligible for a QSI if their current performance rating is at the Acceptable level of the NIH Performance Appraisal Program. However, there is no requirement for granting a QSI for this level of performance. Documentation in support of a nomination for a QSI must cite how the employee consistently demonstrated noteworthy performance through his/her resourcefulness, flexibility, creativity, initiative, perseverance, quality of service, leadership, teamwork, and exemplary execution of daily or special activities crucial to the accomplishments, goals, objectives, or performance of the organization.

f. Staff Recognition Award:

A cash award ranging up to \$10,000 to an employees or group of employees which recognizes them for their accomplishment of duties in a manner characterized by high work output; consistently completing timely work products of high quality; and/or providing, prompt, and courteous service to customers, clients, and coworkers. At the higher monetary levels (over \$2500) employee accomplishments must be exemplary and of exceptionally high quality to qualify for this award.

2. Non-monetary Recognition:

This category includes Time-Off Awards, DHHS, NIH and IC Honor Awards, Length of Service Recognition, Retirement Recognition. In addition, ICs may grant other forms of informal non-monetary recognition determined by individual ICs to fit their organizational culture. Such items of nominal value (NTE \$100) as mugs, Tee-shirts, mouse pads, hats, etc. may be used as performance awards for individuals or groups of employees who may not otherwise receive monetary recognition for their efforts.

a. Time-Off Award:

This award is given to employees as an excused absence without loss of pay

or charge to leave, in recognition of a superior accomplishment or other personal effort that contributes to the quality, efficiency, or economy of government operations. The maximum amount of time off that may be granted for any full-time employee during one leave year is 80 hours. For part-time employees, the maximum hours that may be granted during one leave year are the number of hours in the employee's biweekly scheduled tour of duty. This award does not carry over from year to year, may not transfer if the employee leaves, and may not be exchanged for cash.

Employees who receive the Time-Off Award must obtain supervisory permission when scheduling their time off. At the IC's discretion, managers and supervisors may allow employees to participate in the granting of a Time-Off Award. Employees may be provided with a limited number of Time-Off vouchers for a specified period of time (e.g., 2 hours) with which they may recognize coworkers or peers within the individual IC for unusual efforts expended, exemplary service, results achieved, etc., in accomplishing daily or special activities. Employees may also be asked for input regarding the activities of co-workers and peers regarding the granting of Time-Off.

b. Certificate of Service:

A certificate and pin is presented to recognize various milestones (e.g. 10, 20, 30, 40 years) in an employee's federal career.

c. Retirement Certificate:

A certificate may be given to retiring employees to express appreciation for their contributions to the NIH and the federal government.

d. NIH Director's Award:

The Director, NIH, annually recognizes individuals and groups whose special efforts and contributions beyond regular duty requirements have resulted in significant benefits to the programs or the people of the NIH and the fulfillment of the NIH mission. (Examples of such efforts/contributions include exceptional initiative or leadership in carrying out activities to improve NIH program operations or to benefit the NIH environment; unusual competence, compassion, or heroism in an emergency situation at the NIH; outstanding contribution to a special committee or task force dealing with NIH-wide policies, procedures, or operations; outstanding efforts in applying technical or clerical support skills to accomplish the NIH mission; skill and leadership in administration or science; notable competence and resourcefulness in improving the scientific or administrative management of the NIH.)

e. NIH Merit Award:



Given by IC Directors and NIH Deputy and Associate Directors, to recognize individuals or groups whose superior service and achievement warrant special appreciation. (Examples of such service or achievements may include leadership that contributed to the successful accomplishment of an NIH or IC program; significant scientific research or administrative support efforts which contributed substantially to the accomplishment of an IC's primary mission; effective supervisory leadership in training and using employees in a manner that maximizes their career development; creative or outstanding efforts in applying technical or service skills; or notable competence and resourcefulness in improving the scientific or administrative management of the NIH.

#### **H. Nominations, Documentation, Approvals:**

Nominations, Documentation, Approvals: Nominations and approvals must be in accordance with NIH and individual IC delegations of authority. Documentation of nominations and justifications for awards should be simple and streamlined. NIH Form \*\*\*\*\* (Appendix E) with attached appropriate supporting documentation will be used to document all monetary award nominations and approvals. All monetary recognition must be also documented by an SF-50. Approving authorities should consult their IC Personnel Office for their IC's processing guidelines since procedures for processing awards may differ depending on their delegations of authority.

#### **I. Miscellaneous Provisions:**

\* Employees may not appeal or grieve decisions to grant or not to grant monetary or non-monetary recognition or amounts of monetary recognition.

Formal and informal recognition must comply with ethical and procurement restrictions as specified in agency, departmental, and Federal regulations.

#### **Appendix A. Eligibility for Monetary Recognition:**

\* Award proposals should be reviewed by IC Personnel Office for appropriate level of approval.

\*\* For procedures for granting CO Special Act Awards based on scientific achievement, see Corps Personnel Instruction 5 cc27.1.

Employee Category	Special Act or Service	On-the-Spot	Quality Step Increase	Suggestion	Invention	Staff Recognition Award
SES/SSS, SL, ST*	X	X		X	X	
SBRS*	X	X		X	X	
General Schedule	X	X	X	X	X	X

(GS/GM)

Student  
Temporary  
Employment  
Program

X

X

X

X

X

Employee Category	Special Act or Service	On-the-Spot	Quality Step Increase	Suggestion	Invention	Staff Recognition Award
WG, WL, WS	X	X		X	X	X
Commissioned Corps	**			X	X	
IRTA & Visiting Fellows						
Visiting Scientists and Associates, Staff Fellows, and Tenure Track Employees	X	X		X	X	X

#### Appendix A-1. Eligibility for Non-Monetary Recognition:

\* Award proposals should be reviewed by IC Personnel Office for appropriate level of approval.

\*\* IRTAs and VFs are ONLY eligible for the NIH Director's Award and Merit Awards, and only IF they are part of a group.

Employee Category	Time-Off	NIH Director's Award	NIH Merit Award	Certificate of Service	Retirement Certificate
*SES/SSS, ST, SL	X	X	X	X	X
*SBRS	X	X	X	X	X
General Schedule (GS/GM)	X	X	X	X	X
Student Temporary Employment Program	X	X	X		
Employee Category	Time-Off	NIH Director's Award	NIH Merit Award	Certificate of Service	Retirement Certificate

WG, WL, WS	X	X	X	X	X
Commissioned Corps		X	X	X	X
IRTA & Visiting Fellows		**	**		
Visiting Scientists and Associates, Staff Fellows, and Tenure Track Employees	X	X	X	X	X

## Appendix B. Intangible Benefits Scale:

(Special Act or Service, Suggestion Awards, Staff Recognition Award)

Value of Benefits	Limited: Impacts a specific small work unit to as large as a Division or IC.	Broad: Impacts several ICs or all of NIH	General: Impacts the mission of other components of DHHS, or of Agencies other than NIH
Small/Moderate	\$100-325	\$325-650	\$650-1300
Moderate/Substantial	\$325-650	\$650-1300	\$1300-3150
Substantial/Extended	\$650-2500	\$1300-5500	\$3150-10,000

## Appendix C. Tangible Benefits Scale:

(Special Act or Service, Suggestion Awards, Staff Recognition Award)

Benefits	Award
Estimated First-Year Benefits to Government.	Amount of Award to Employee.
Up to \$10,000 in benefits.	10% of benefits.
Between \$10,000 and \$100,000 in benefits.	\$1000, plus 3% to 10% of benefits over \$10,000.
More than \$100,000 in benefits.	\$3700 to \$10,000 for the first \$100,000 in benefits, plus 0.5% to 1.0% of benefits above \$100,000, up to \$250,000 with the approval of the Office of Personnel Management. Presidential approval is required for all awards of more than \$25,000.

## Appendix D. Other NIH Awards:

### A. DHHS Secretary's Award for Distinguished Service

The highest level honor award within DHHS, granted for accomplishments that

advance the mission and goals of the Department. Award designed to emphasize displays of leadership, skill and ability through improved teamwork; empowerment of employees; improved partnerships across or among organizations; better customer service; continuous improvement; or innovative solutions.

#### **B. Harvey J. Bullock, Jr. Award for Equal Opportunity Achievement**

An award granted to an employee for significant contributions in furthering equal opportunity for all NIH employees; efforts made to improve communication between employees and management; contributions that increased awareness or sensitivity of management to concerns and problems of NIH employees; or contributions that have had an impact on the upward mobility efforts for NIH employees.

#### **C. National Institutes of Health Equal Employment Opportunity Award of the Year**

An award granted to an employee who has clearly excelled in actively and effectively furthering equal employment opportunity within NIH. Employees who have received EEO Special Achievement Awards during the preceding calendar year will automatically be considered for this award.

#### **D. Distinguished Service Medal**

This award recognizes an exceedingly high level of achievement and is the highest award given a commissioned officer. It is bestowed upon an officer who has demonstrated a genuine sense of public service by making exceptional contributions to the mission of the PHS. Achievements to be recognized may range from extraordinary management of a major health program to a heroic act.

#### **E. Meritorious Service Medal**

This award recognizes a single important achievement or career of notable accomplishments. It is the second highest award a Commissioned Officer may receive. The award may be granted for a highly significant achievement in research, program direction, or program administration; a series of significant contributions; a continuing period of meritorious service; or exhibition of great courage in hazardous work or an emergency.

#### **F. Outstanding Service Medal**

This award recognizes continuous outstanding leadership and is presented to officers who have either demonstrated outstanding continuous leadership in carrying out the mission of the PHS or have performed a single accomplishment that has had a major effect on the health of the nation. It may also be granted for the performance of a heroic act resulting in the preservation of health or property.

#### **G. Outstanding Unit Citation**

This award recognizes superior service toward achieving the goals and objectives of the PHS. It recognizes the performance of exceptional service of national or

international significance and is usually granted for specific actions over a relatively short period of time.

## **H. Other Honor Awards**

Additional Commissioned Corps Honor Awards presented at the IC level include:

- PHS Citation
- PHS Achievement Medal
- PHS Commendation Medal
- PHS Unit Commendation

For information on eligibility and award criteria contact your IC Personnel Office.

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